



February 5, 2024

Re.: FY25 Capital Budget – allocations for stream restorations

Dear Council Members,

On behalf of the Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) I am commenting on Montgomery County's proposed FY25 budget allocations for stream restorations.

Most of the County's streams are severely degraded owing to human activities. Principal among these is the huge increase in storm water runoff following heavy rainfall events as compared to pre-development times. The large percentage of the County which is covered in impervious surfaces (residential, business and municipal buildings, as well as streets and parking lots) means that most rainfall cannot percolate into the ground, but swiftly flows to the nearest drain or stream. This in turn leads to erosion of stream beds and banks, and sediment loss, much of the latter eventually reaching the Chesapeake Bay.

Successful stream restorations seek to return streams to their natural, pre-development state. Stream beds are modified so as to resemble pre-development streams. Riffles, pools, cross vanes and imbricated walls are added to the stream channel. Native plants are planted along their banks.

We support ecologically sensitive stream restorations, but with the essential caveat that they are coupled with actions to greatly reduce the severity of stormwater runoff. Such actions include creation of rain gardens, porous parking areas and bioswales and the planting native trees along the stream banks. Healthy streams are beneficial to birds.

Stream restorations which involve removing large numbers of mature trees and radically altering the stream environment and its biota are the least desirable environmentally, harmful to birds and other wildlife. They also adversely impact the aesthetics of neighborhoods due to loss of trees and natural landscapes.

A good example of a successful stream restoration is that of the Calverton Channel in Prince George's County. This converted a cement culvert into a real natural stream with native vegetation. The following link describes the project:

https://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/sites/default/files/media-document/dcv30197_calverton-channel-rehabilitation_final_1108117.pdf

An example of a stream restoration that failed is Locksley Branch (also known as North West Branch) in Montgomery County, which is still eroding away because the sources of stormwater upstream were not addressed.

Before a stream restoration project is begun, area residents should be informed of it and their input sought.

MOS is a volunteer organization with about 2000 members, organized into 15 chapters throughout the state, including Montgomery County. Our goal is the study, conservation and enjoyment of wild birds that spend at least part of their lives in Maryland.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robin G. Todd". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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